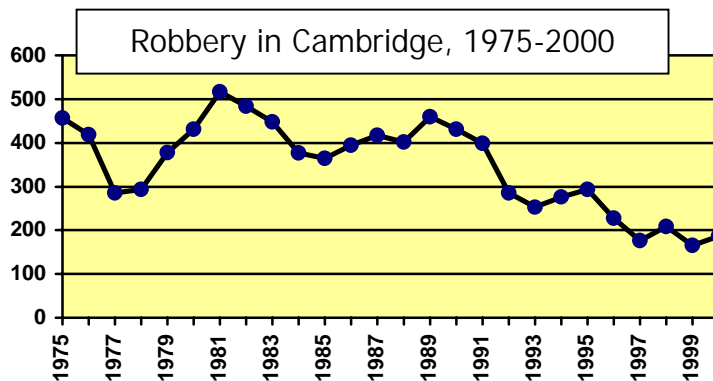


# Robbery

165 in 1999 • 186 in 2000 • 13% Increase



*Robbery* is the taking or attempted taking of anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear. This crime includes muggings, purse snatchings, and bank hold-ups.

Robbery is theft in which the offender confronts the victim and steals the victim's property through force or threat of force. It includes "muggings" and "hold-ups," though the offender does not need to display a weapon (and about half of them do not) for the crime to be categorized as a robbery.

Robbery is usually committed on the street, in the dark, by an offender or offenders who the victim does not know. The confrontational, threatening nature of the crime has a strong influence on the behavior of the public. Robbery is one of the crimes most often considered by a citizen when he or she gauges the general "safety" of an area.

Robberies are divided into robberies of *institutions* (e.g., banks, convenience stores) and robberies of *individuals*. These are colloquially known as *commercial robbery* and *street robbery*. Commercial Robbery makes up less than 15 percent of the robbery total in Cambridge. Unlike assault, robbery statistics are fairly sound; robbery victims are very likely to report the crime.

	1999	2000	Change
Commercial Robbery	18	23	+28%
Street Robbery	147	163	+11%
Total	165	186	+13%

1999's robbery total was the lowest reported in Cambridge since the mid-1960s (when we started measuring crime). Commercial robbery, which plunged from an average of 100 a year in the 1980s to 18 in 1999, was probably at the lowest point since the days of stagecoach hold-ups.

2000 was following on this long-standing downward trend until June when things began to get tough. The year closed out at a 13% increase over 1999's all time low due in part to an increase in Commercial Robbery.

## Commercial Robbery

Commercial Robbery describes the taking or attempted taking of anything of value from the care or custody of a commercial or financial establishment. Examples of this crime include the bank heist, the cab stick-up, and the convenience store hold-up.

From 1970 to 1990, Cambridge averaged 100 commercial robberies annually, but starting in 1990, it began to swiftly plummet, totaling only 18 in 1999, an all time low. Nationally, commercial robbery accounts for 28% of total robberies; in Cambridge, in 2000, it made up only 12%. A yearly total of 23 commercial robberies for a city the size of Cambridge are astonishingly low. An average city of our size has around 50.

### Commercial Robberies by Location Type

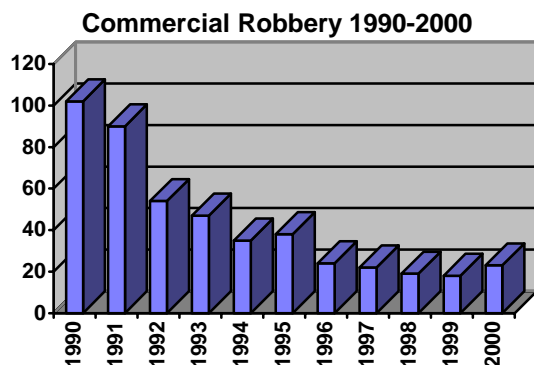
Type	1997	1998	1999	2000
Bank/Armored Car	3	2	6	4
Bar/Restaurant	3	3	2	1
Cab	3	2	2	3
Convenience/Gas	8	6	4	8
Misc. Retail	5	6	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>

Cambridge statistics do reflect a national decline in commercial robbery since the 1980s. A number of factors account for this trend, including increased security measures at gas stations (plexi-glass booths), convenience stores (drop safes, silent alarms), and banks (dye packs, better surveillance cameras, "man traps"); the Cambridge Police Department's Park & Walk program, which increases police visibility in vulnerable areas; and the disappearance of the particular breed of criminal who commits commercial hold-ups.

Commercial robbery in 2000 increased by five incidents from 1999. There were five convenience store robberies, four bank robberies, three robberies

of gas stations, three taxicab robberies, two Hotels, and one robbery each of a drug store, liquor store, parking garage, auto rental shop, café, and a video rental shop.

Two branches of the Cambridge Savings Bank, one BankBoston branch, and the National Bank of Greece were robbed this year. In the earlier Cambridge Savings Bank robbery, a suspect came into the bank and threatened the teller with a grenade. A similar robbery had occurred in Boston during the previous week and when the Bank Robbery Task Force made an arrest of a Boston man, he also confessed to the robbery in Cambridge.



Central Square reported two taxicab robberies this year. Both involved multiple males who after getting a ride robbed the driver of his money, one at gun and knife point and in the other they only mentioned that they had a weapon. The third and final taxicab robbery of the year, in October, ended in the arrest of two Cambridge residents after they picked up a cab in Somerville and once in East Cambridge held a gun to the cabbie and demanded all his money. A passing motorist, an off duty MBTA Officer, followed the fleeing suspects to an apartment where they were found and arrested with a pellet gun.

Robbers targeted two gas stations last February: a Shell gas station on the Monsignor O'Brien Highway and the Fresh Pond Mobil on the Fresh Pond Parkway. The third and most recent gas station robbery occurred on September 5<sup>th</sup> at the Memorial Dr. Mobil. In each case, handguns were shown and money from the cash register was taken.

Contributing to the total were five convenience store robberies. In April an arrest was made of a robber who held up a convenience store on Columbia Street. The young robber held a gun to the store clerk's head and demanded all the money. Fortunately when the robber fled, he left his jacket behind, which carried his identification.

Cambridge Police made arrests in three of the 23 Commercial Robberies. Nabbed were one local teen that dropped his ID as he fled a convenience store on Columbia St., a local man who violently robbed a liquor store on Cambridge St. and was identified by

surveillance tape and arrested as well as the two cab driver robbers who were tracked to an East Cambridge apartment.

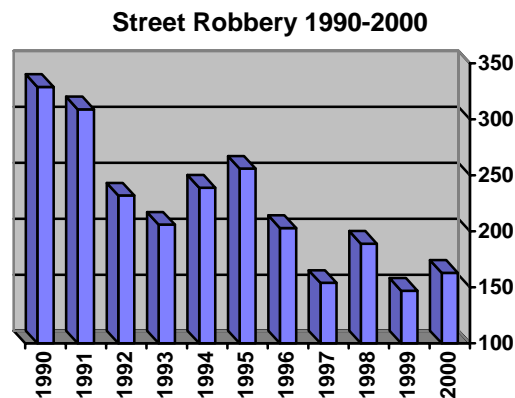
Geographic Breakdown of Commercial Robberies

AREA	1998	1999	2000
East Cambridge/Galleria	1	0	5
Kendall Square/M.I.T.	0	0	1
Inman Square/Harrington	4	2	3
Central Square	4	5	4
Cambridgeport/Riverside	1	1	2
Bay Square	0	0	1
Harvard Square	5	2	2
Mass. Ave. 1500-1900	1	4	0
Porter Square/North Camb.	2	3	2
Alewife/West Cambridge	1	1	3

## Street Robbery

"Street robbery" describes all robberies committed against individuals, as opposed to commercial establishments. Despite the name, a "street" robbery does not necessarily have to occur on the street, although more than 75% of them do. Examples of street robberies are "muggings," "carjackings," and "purse snatchings."

After years of steady decline, street robbery bottomed out in 1999 with the lowest ever reported total of 147 incidents, with 1997's 154 incidents a close second. Since 1996 this crime type has teetered between approximately 150 reports and 200 reports averaging out at 171 incidents a year for the past five years.



A long-term trend analysis of street robbery reveals 12 recurring scenarios:

**Acquaintance Robberies:** Related to the Domestic Robbery and the Homeless Robbery (see below), Acquaintance Robberies are committed by someone the victim knows. Common scenarios include drinking buddies robbing each other after a night at the bar, friends turning on each other, drug disputes, and robberies between co-workers.

**Bikejackings:** In this scenario, any number of attackers will approach a young (10-15 years old) male victim on a bicycle and, through force of

numbers, knives, or other weapons, will demand the victim's bike. Often, the attacker simply shoves the victim off of his bicycle and takes it. In a good portion of bikejackings, the victim knows his attacker. In the year 2000 this type of crime included a large number of incidents where the target item was not a bike but one of the highly popular metallic scooters that are sold at high prices nationwide.

**Bully Boys:** Juvenile robberies of intimidation. In most occurrences, the victim knows the perpetrators. Committed by and against school-aged youths, they occur on the way home from school, or at playgrounds, malls, parks, and skating rinks. Two to four juvenile males usually strong-arm their victim, stealing such things as his jacket, hat, or lunch money.

**Carjackings:** In this scenario, a lone predator will approach a victim entering or exiting his or her car, or when stopped at a traffic light. In no uncertain terms, the robber will order the victim out of the vehicle and demand the keys.

**Dial-a-Victim:** These are robberies of delivery service personnel. A delivery person is intercepted before entering a phony location by suspects brandishing a knife or gun. Arrests made in 1993 had a major impact in curtailing this crime.

**Domestic Robberies:** The domestic robbery is a relatively new scenario, which has emerged over the past several years. In these incidents, the perpetrator is usually an ex-boyfriend, who uses force in street confrontations to take back jewelry or cash. Family robberies are also on the rise: husbands robbing their wives, brothers robbing their sisters, and estranged children robbing their parents or grandparents. Many of these robberies involve past debts.

**Home Invasions:** One of the most serious robbery types, home invasions involves robbers entering their victim's homes, usually at night, subduing the residents (sometimes by tying them), and robbing the home. Fortunately, this type of robbery is rare in Cambridge, and when it occurs, the victim usually knows the robber or robbers.

**Homeless Robberies:** The homeless robbery is a sad scenario reflecting urban life in the 1990s: homeless people robbing each other. The majority of these robberies occur in the vicinity of Central and Harvard Squares, or at various shelters. The victim usually knows with the perpetrator, and in many cases, both are intoxicated. Property stolen ranges from a bottle of wine to a blanket to a pair of shoes. Homeless robberies are sometimes precipitated by past debts, real or imaginary.

**Pack Robberies:** In this situation, a group of three to eight young males will stalk victims around shopping malls, MBTA stations, streets, parks, and recreational areas. The majority of these robberies occur on Friday or Saturday nights, when the "pack" is returning from a dance or party. The robberies are not always premeditated, but the victim—typically a male between the ages of 15 and 25, walking alone—simply ends up on the wrong place at the wrong time. Weapons are seldom used, but strong-arm tactics are applied. Usually, the victim is knocked to the ground or ordered to lie down while the robbers shake him down for his wallet, watch, or other valuables.

**Predatory Robberies:** This type of street robbery has the most pronounced effect on a citizen's perception of safety. Predatory robberies are synonymous with "muggings." In the typical scenario, one or two men approach the victim with a knife or gun and demand cash. The danger of serious injury is ever present. In recent years, predatory robbers have become cruder and less controlled, pushing and kicking their victims. Cambridge typically experiences more two-person predatory robberies than any other type.

Because of the frequency of this type of robbery, the crime analysis unit further subdivides predatory robberies into "crude" and "professional" robberies. "Crude" means that the robbers were edgy, unprepared, and unpredictable. In "professional" predatory robberies, the robbers are collected, efficient, and effective.

**Purse Snatch:** The purse snatcher is generally unarmed, and has little intent to cause injury. After "casing" a victim—a female carrying a purse, bag, or wallet—this robber runs up from behind—on foot or on a bicycle—and snatches the item out of the victim's hands or off her shoulder before she can react, often effecting a "body check" in the process.

Street Robberies by Categorization			
Categorization	1998	1999	2000
Acquaintance	13	10	5
Bikejackings	9	3	3
Bully Boys	21	22	15
Carjacking	5	1	4
Dial-a-Victim	2	3	0
Domestic	4	2	0
Home Invasion	7	1	3
Homeless	6	8	4
Pack Robbery	20	19	30
Predatory (Crude)	59	53	59
Predatory (Pro.)	26	13	18
Purse Snatching	17	12	22



## Geography

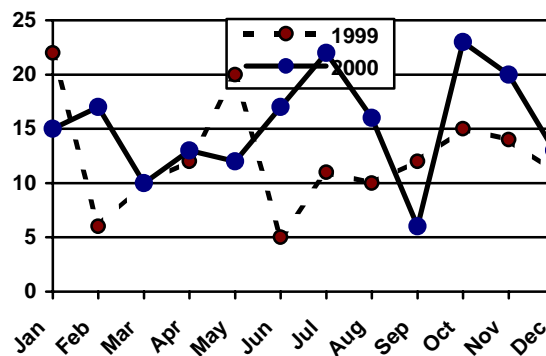
Neighborhoods reporting the highest street robbery totals in 2000 were Area 4, Cambridgeport, Riverside, Mid-Cambridge, and Inman/ Harrington. Area 4 and Cambridgeport, together make up most of "Central Square," which traditionally reports the highest robbery totals. Central Square has long been a robbery hot spot for several reasons, including its high pedestrian traffic, its proximity to bars, its MBTA subway stop, its comparatively high "street" population; and its reputation as a drug trafficking area.

In 2000 the Mid-Cambridge and Riverside neighborhoods were hit harder than in the past by this crime type as increases in both Central Sq. and Harvard Sq.'s attributed to the totals for these neighborhoods. Both square's are the east and west boundaries of these neighborhoods which may have been effected by spillover from these traditionally high crime areas.

Cambridge Highlands, Strawberry Hill, and MIT remain the least likely neighborhoods to report a street robbery. The former two can credit their relative lack of nightlife, while MIT benefits from patrol from two police departments: the Cambridge Police and the M.I.T. Campus Police.

## Seasonal Variations

As the graph shown here suggests, street robbery isn't subject to predictable seasonal patterns. Except for the months of March and April, all numbers in 2000 were polar opposites of 1999. Reports were heavy in the spring of 1999 and low in 2000, low in the summer of 1999 yet high in the summer of 2000. Trends were almost always on opposite tracts showing little to no seasonal similarities.



## Times of Day and Day of Week

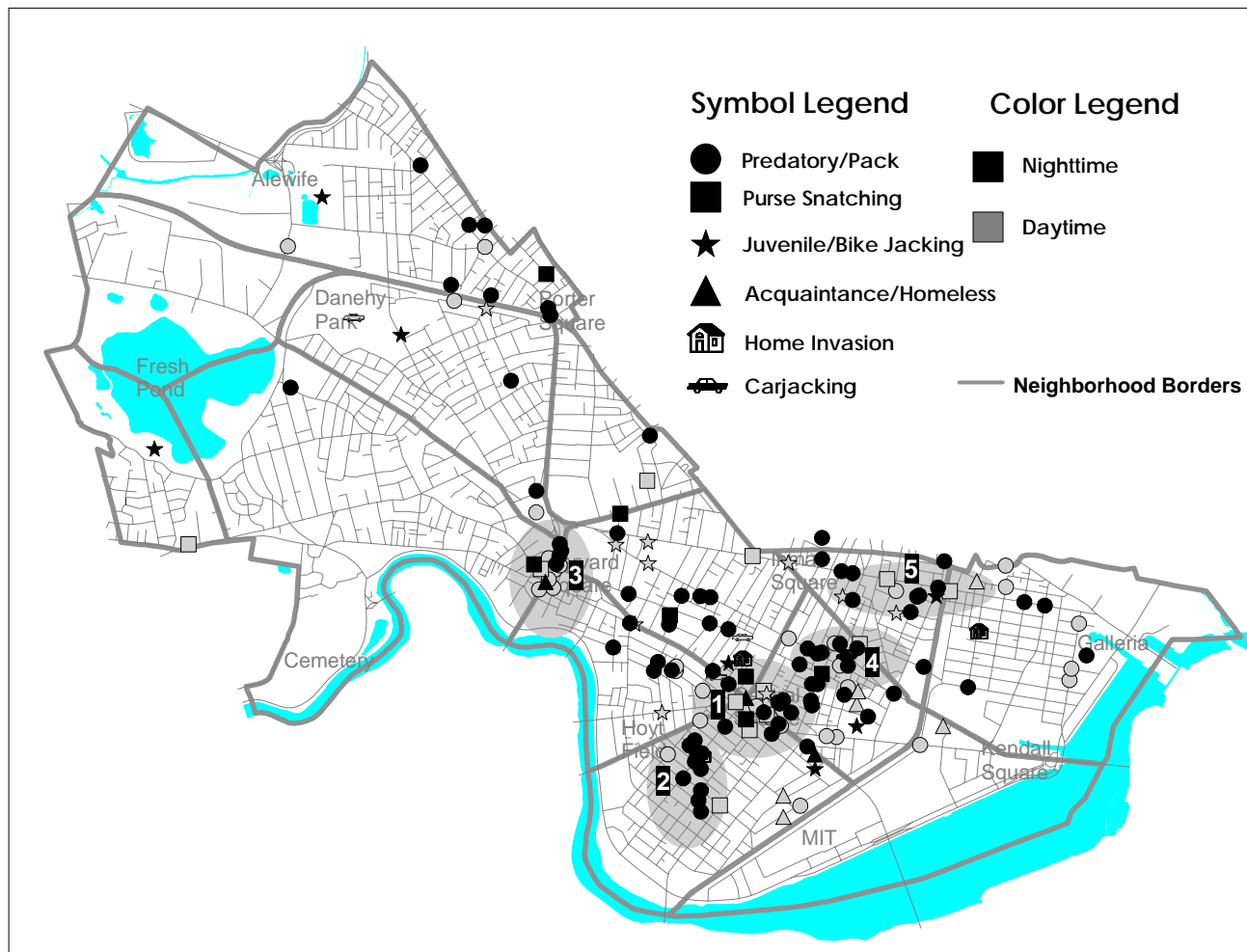
Temporal analysis of street robberies is more revealing: more than a third occur between 8:00 p.m. and midnight, a quarter between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and a fifth between midnight and 4:00 a.m. Very few happen between 4:00 a.m. and noon. "Hot times" vary with the type of robbery. Predatory robberies (or "muggings") are most active between 7:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m., while juvenile robberies and purse snatchings are more often a daytime occurrence between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Saturday was the most probable day for a robbery in 2000, but no other days stood out particularly.

## Offenders and Victims

The Cambridge Police Department arrested 24 individuals for street robbery in 2000. All but one was a male. The age of the offenders ranged from 14 to 46, with an average age of 22. Four of the individuals arrested were homeless. Eight were from Cambridge. Five of those arrested were from Boston, most from Dorchester. Victims were 27% female and 73% male. A third of the robberies committed against women were purse snatchings; most of the rest were predatory.

## Street Robbery by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	1990s Average	1998	1999	2000	Change 99-00	% of 00 Total	1990s Rank	2000 Rank
East Cambridge	21	20	20	12	-40%	7%	4	6
MIT	6	1	1	2	Incalc.	1%	10	10
Inman/Harrington	15	14	19	18	-5%	11%	7	5
Area 4	49	36	38	36	-5%	22%	1	1
Cambridgeport	34	27	24	27	+13%	17%	2	2
Mid-Cambridge	19	20	6	18	+200%	11%	5	4
Riverside	16	20	11	21	+91%	13%	6	3
Agassiz	6	10	1	2	Incalc.	1%	11	11
Peabody	15	14	8	8	None	5%	8	8
West Cambridge	12	6	3	7	+133%	4%	9Riv	9
North Cambridge	23	17	14	9	-36%	6%	3	7
Highlands	3	1	1	1	None	1%	13	13
Strawberry Hill	4	3	1	2	Incalc.	1%	12	12



## Street Robbery Hotspots in 2000

### 1. Central Square/Area 4

Numerous patterns and occurrences were noticed in Central Square and the side streets adjacent to this area in 2000. Streets such as Massachusetts Avenue, Bishop Allen Drive, Norfolk Street, Harvard Street, and Windsor Street are affected most. Robberies are most likely between 8:30 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. A few two- or three-incident patterns were reported in this area in 2000.

### 2. Cambridgeport

The northern portion of this neighborhood compiles a large portion of Central Sq., which is a typically high crime area for numerous reasons. In 2000 the central portions of this largely residential area experienced street robbery patterns and this is therefore the second street robbery hotspot for the year. Recurring afternoon and evening patterns in the fall, which involved similar suspects, were ended in December and will hopefully continue to be quiet on into this year.

### 3. Harvard Sq.

Robbery has returned to the areas it once was most prevalent. Street robberies in this area had been slowly migrating out from the heart of the square and the numbers were dwindling. In 2000 the numbers for this area continued to decrease but most occurred in what may be considered the center of the square, the "pit." This area, named for the sunken subway entrance, has been a longstanding hotspot for numerous crime types including street robbery.

### 4. Fletcher School Area

This area, which is comprised of Broadway between Prospect St. and Windsor St.'s as well as the connecting side streets, had a high concentration of nighttime predatory robberies.

### 5. Cambridge St. 700-1300

This stretch of road and the connecting side streets also saw a higher than average concentration of street robberies. The robberies in this area were mostly at night with the exception of a small number of daytime purse snatchings and bikejackings.